Offices functioning in the State of Kerala during the last three years is as follows:

Passport Office	1996	1997	1998
Trivandrum	77,106	92,522	87,478
Cochin	84,710	1,05,615	1,10,120
Kozhikode	1,40,574	1,48,055	1,41,976

(c) The Passport Office in Trivandrum issued 82,838 passports during 1998 and the total number of pending applications at the end of the year was 7,331.

Japan's refusal to life curbs on Loan

993. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Japan has declined to lift curbs on loans to India during the course of recent official meeting at Tokyo between Indian Foreign Secretary and Japanese Deputy Foreign Minister;

(b) if so, what are the reasons thereof; and

(c) what are the details of topic discussed and decision arrived at during that meeting?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) Immediately following our nuclear tests in May, 1998, the Japanese government announced that they would, *inter-alia* take the following measures. Freeze grant assistance and Yen loans for new projects except projects with a humanitarian purpose; and they would examine the loans extended to India by international financial institutions. No substantive change in this position was indicated in the course of the recent official talks held by Foreign Secretary in the Japanese Foreign Ministry in Tokyo from 17-21 January, 1999.

The discussions at the Foreign Secretary level talks covered different aspects of bilateral relations as well as regional and international issues of mutual interest. Both sides agreed to proceed with intergovernmental consultations including India-Japan Trade Talks, policy dialogue between the Ministry of External Affairs of the Indian government and the Ministry of International Trade and Industry of the Government of Japan, the meeting of the India Japan Joint Commission on Science & Technology, as well as parliamentary and Cultural Exchanges.

Indo Sri Lanka Accord as free-trade

994. SHRI C.O. POULOSE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the salient features of Indo-Sri Lanka accord on free-trade; and

(b) the details of the conditions attached of the proposed liberalisation of trade between the two countries?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH):

India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Accord

(a) and (b) The India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement was signed on 28.12.98 during the visit of the Sri Lankan President to India, wherein both countries have agreed to progressively eliminate tariffs on bilateral trade. Tariffs are to be phased out in 3 years by India on imports from Sri Lanka and in 8 years by Sri Lanka on imports from India. Tariff concessions would not be available on the items to be specified in the 'Negative List'.

For being eligible for tariff concessions, the Domestic Value Added Content (DVA), should be at least 35% of F.O.B. value, If inputs from the other contracting party are used, the value of such inputs upto 10% can be set off against the 35%. Further, the product must have undergone a manufacturing process, and, after the process, be classified in a different 4 digit level, HS code (Harmonised Commodity Description and Coding System), than those in which the non-originating materials used in the

manufacture are classified. Simple packing or packaging operations, operations to ensure preservation of products, breaking up and assembly of consignments, affixing of labels etc., will not be considered as sufficient processing to confer the status of originating products, under the Rules of Origin.

The Agreement provides for a safeguard by way of provisional suspension of tariff concessions, in case there is a sharp increase in imports so as to cause injury to domestic industry. The contracting parties are also free to apply their domestic legislation to restrict imports, in cases where prices are influenced by unfair trade practices like subsidies or dumping.

Infiltration from Bangladesh

995. SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have looked into infiltration and illegal migration from Bangladesh into India;

(b) whether Government have taken up the matter with the concerned authorities of the Bangladesh Government;

(c) whether Government are planning to open Dhaka-Calcutta bus route; and

(d) whether Government have taken precautions to avoid infiltration and illegal migration on opening of the bus route?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Government of India has often conveyed its concern about the seriousness and magnitude of the problem of infiltration and illegal migration to the Government of Bangladesh at the political and diplomatic levels. The Government of Bangladesh has conveyed the assurance that measures will be taken to strengthen security at the border to prevent illegal border crossing.

(c) and (d) An agreement was initialled on 17 February 1999 with the Government of Bangladesh to start a bus service between Calcutta and Dhaka. Necessary logistical, security and administrative measures are being put in place in consultation with the State Government in West Bengal and the concerned Departments of the Government of India.

Separate Passport for Children

996. SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have made any changes in rules to stipulate that the children must obtain separate passports;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether Government are aware that the new rule create serious problem of obtaining visa for children to accompany the parent; and

(d) if so, what steps have been taken to relax the amended rules?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Since the endorsement of the child's name on the parent's passport was done without any photograph of the child, it was open to extensive misuse. Besides, a number of countries have stopped issuing visas to children whose names are endorsed on their parent's passports.

(c) and (d) No, Sir. No such problem in obtaining visa for children due to their having separate passports has come to the notice of the Government.

Threats to Disrupt PM's Pak Trip

997. SHRI ABANI ROY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Governemt's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned "Pak hardliners vow to disrupt PM's trip" as reported in the *Statesman* dated 15th February, 1999;